

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 OES-07 DLOS-09 EB-07 COME-00

CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00

NSC-05 PA-02 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-15 ERDA-07

AID-05 CEA-01 EPG-02 FEAE-00 FPC-01 INT-05 OMB-01

STR-04 TRSE-00 ACDA-10 /138 W

-----311657Z 007431 /43

P 311606Z MAY 77

FM AMCONSUL TUNIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6943

INFO AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY VALLETTA

CINCUSNAVEUR

COMSIXTHFLT

EUCOM

SECDEF WASHDC

USDOCOSOUTH NAPLES

UNCLAS TUNIS 03815

CINCUSNAVEUR, COMSIXTHFLT, EUCOM USDOCOSOUTH ALSO FOR POLADS

3.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, ENRG, TS, LY

SUBJECT: TUNISIAN MEDIA CONTINUES HEAVY COVERAGE OF CONTINENTAL
SHELF DISPUTE WITH LIBYA.

REF: TUNIS 3779

1. SUMMARY. TUNISIAN MEDIA CONTINUES TO GIVE HEAVY COVERAGE
TO TUNISIAN-LUBYAN DISPUTE OVER CONTINENTAL SHELF AND TO
PRESENCE OF READING AND BATES DRILLING SHIP IN CONTESTED
AREA. FOLLOWNG IS RESUME OF TUNISIAN MEDIA REPORTING
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MAY 29-31. END SUMMARY.

2. ALL PAPERS MAY 29 DEVOTED FRNT PAGES TO DISPUTE. PSD
PARTY DAILY "L'ACTION" HEADLINED "CONTINUING TENSION IN
GULF OF GABES, CONTRARY TO LIBYAN CLAIMS"; SIMILAR THEME
FOLLOWED IN OOTHER PAPERS. MEDIA GAOE PROMINENT PLAY TO
REPORTS THAT READING AND BATES DRILLING SHIP WAS ESCORTED TO
SITE BY LIBYAN NAVAL UNITS, INCLUDING PATROL BOATS AKRAM

AND TOBROUK AND SUBMARINE BADR. (SOME PAPERS SUGGESTED LAST MIGHT HAVE SOVIET CREW). PRESS ALSO REPORTED THAT SIX ARMED LIBYAN COMMANDOS HAD BEEN HELICOPTED TO DRILLING SHIP. PAPERS STATED GOT COUNCIL OF MINISTERS HAD MET MAY 28 TO REVIEW SITUATION, AND ANOTHER MEETING, CHAIRED BY PRIME MINISTER, WAS SCHEDULED FOR MAY 30. ALL TUNISIAN MEDIA MAY 29 GAVE HEAVY COVERAGE TO PRESIDENT CARTER'S CONGRATULATORY MESSAGE TO PRESIDENT BOURGUIBA ON OCCASION OF JUNE 1 "VICTORY DAY", NOTING THAT MESSAGE HAD SPECIAL SIGNIFICANCE IN VIEW OF CONTINENTAL SHELF DEVELOPMENTS. PROMINENT ATTENTION ALSO GIVEN TO ANNOUNCEMENT THAT PRIME MINISTER NOUIRA WOULD SOON VISIT UNITED STATES AT PRESIDENT'S INVITATION.

3. ON DIPLOMATIC FRONT, MAY 29 MEDIA REPORTED PRIME MINISTER MET WITH AMBASSADORS OF EGYPT AND IRAQ AND THAT HEALTH MINISTER KOOLI, FOLLOWING RECENT TRIP TO MOROCCO, TOLD PRESIDENT BOURGUIBA THAT KING HASSAN AND MOROCCAN GOVERNMENT "SUPPORT TUNISIA ON CONTINENTAL SHELF PROBLEM". TUNISIAN STUDENT ORGANIZATION UGET WAS REPORTED TO HAVE SENT MESSAGE TO ITS COUNTERPART IN LIBYA ASKING IT TO AID IN RESOLVING DISPUTE AND TUNISIAN LABOR LEADER HABIB ACHOUR WAS ALSO SAID TO BE IN TELEPHONIC CONTACT WITH LIBYAN LABOR OFFICIALS CONCERNING DISPUTE.

4. TUNISIAN RADIO AND TV ON MAY 30 CONTINUED GIVING PRIMARY ATTENTION TO DISPUTE. TUNISIAN DAILIES DO NOT APPEAR ON MONDAYS, BUT WEEKLY "TUNIS HEBDO" PUBLISHED GOT PRESS AGENCY UNCLASSIFIED

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RELEASE REPORTING THAT TUNISIAN AMBASSADOR IN CAIRO (AND TUNISIAN REPRESENTATIVE TO ARAB LEAGUE) DELIVERED NOTE TO SECRETARY GENERAL OF ARAB LEAGUE ON MAY 29 PROTESTING LIBYAN ACTIONS AND OUTLINING TUNISIAN POSITION. ARTICLE QUOTED TUNISIAN AMBASSADOR AS SAYING THAT SITUATION IS EXPLOSIVE, TUNISIAN POSITION IS BASED ON INTERNATIONAL LAW, AND TUNISIA IS DETERMINED TO PROTECT ITS RIGHTS AND TO PRESERVE RELATIONS BETWEEN TUNISIAN AND LIBYAN PEOPLES.

5. PRESS OF MAY 31 CONTAINED FURTHER EDITORIAL COMMENT SUPPORTING GOT POSITION IN DISPUTE. ALL TUESDAY PAPERS REPORTED THAT TUNISIAN FOREIGN MINISTER CHATTY MEOW WITH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY IN FOUR HOUR CLOSED DOOR SESSION ON MAY 30. MEDIA ALSO NOTED PRESIDENT BOURGUIBA MET WITH TUNISIAN MINISTER OF DEFENSE FARHAT ON MAY 30. ALL PAPERS CARRIED TUNISIAN FOREIGN MINISTRY STATEMENT REJECTING, POINT-BY-POINT, A DECLARATION MADE BY LIBYAN FORMER SPOKESMAN. GOT SPOKESMAN SPECIFICALLY REJECTED LIBYAN DESCRIPTION OF DISPUTE AS "AN ARTIFICIALLY PROVOKED TEMPEST WITHOUT ANY RELATIONSHIP TO REALITY AND ENTIRELY WITHOUT

FORUNDATION", PUTTING FULL BLAME ON LIBYA. GOT STATEMENT ALSO CONTRADICTED LIBYAN CONTENTION THAT DRILLING SHIP TOOK POSITION WITHOUT BEING ACCOMPANIED BY "DEMONSTRATION OF MILITARY FORCE" AND THAT SITE FALLS WITHIN "CONTINENTAL SHELF UNDER LIBYAN SOVEREIGNTY". (SEPTEL TO DEPARTMENT FOLLOWS ON GOT STATEMENT.)

6. SEMI-INDEPENDENT DAILY "LE TEMPS" ON MAY 31 HEADLINED FRONT PAGE ARTICLE, "INTENSIVE POLITICAL AND DIPLOMATIC ACTIVITY." MOST PAPERS REPORTED THAT ON MAY 29 PRESIDENT BOURGUIBA RECEIVED LIBYAN AMBASSADOR ZENTANI (HIGH REPRESENTATIVE) IN TUNIS, AND THAT AMBASSADOR LEFT AFTERWARDS FOR TRIPOLI WITH "VERBAL MESSAGE" FROM BOURGUIBA TO COL. QADHAFI. ACCORDING TO PRESS ACCOUNTS QUOTING LIBYAN RADIO, AMBASSADOR ZENTANI MET WITH QADHAFI IN TRIPLOI NEXT DAY, DELIVERING BOURGUIBA'S MESSAGE. PRESS UNCLASSIFIED

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STATES THAT QADHAFI IN TURN GAVE LIBYAN AMBASSADOR "VERBAL MESSAGE" FOR BOURGUIBA, AND DISPATCHED HIM BACK TO TUNIS WITH THIS AND "SOME DOCUMENTS" FOR PRESIDENT BOURGUIBA.

7. DESCRIBING OTHER GOT DIPLOMATIC EFFORTS, PRESS REPORTED

THAT TUNISIAN AMBASSADOR IN ALGIERS HAD MET WITH NUMBER OF GOA OFFICIALS TO DISCUSS CONTINENTAL SHELF ISSUE, AND THAT QUESTION WAS ALSO DISCUSSED IN TUNIS WITH VISITING SYRIAN MINISTER OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS ADI. MULCAHY

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